

The Role of Basic Beliefs in Predicting Life Management Strategies (Selection, Optimization, & Compensation)

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Abstract

Present research aimed at studying the role of believing in world meaningfulness and favorable self in prediction of life management strategies. This study was a kind of descriptive research which was done by correlation method. The population was all university students of Qouchan, Iran, in which 467 of them (255 boys and 212 girls) were chosen by proportional stratified sampling. Their age range was from 28 to 50. In order to gather data Basic Belief Inventory (BBI) and selection, optimization, and compensation questionnaire (SOC) were used. To find the relationship among variables Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were used by enter method. Findings revealed that believing in world meaningfulness and favorable-self have positive significant relationship with all components of life management strategies, in fact they can predict all components of life management strategies. Therefore people who consider their surrounding more meaningful, have more optimal beliefs in themselves, and use SOC strategies in their life management strategies more than others. In other words they can control their lives more successfully.

Keywords: Basic Beliefs, Compensation, Life Management Strategies, Optimization, Selection

Introduction

In order to find how people manage their life in a way which leads to promotion, individual improvement, and wealth Baltes and Baltes (1990) suggested a pattern including selection, optimization and compensation patterns. As a matter of fact it is believed that these patterns, selection, optimization, and compensation, adopt a universal view. According to this view people manage their lives through these 3 growth regulation processes successfully (Freund and Baltes, 2002). This theory presents the definition and performance of selection, optimization, and compensation in the way of achieving a goal (Baltes and Freund, 2003). This theory provides the definition of motivational processes to choose and follow a goal during life time (Freund and Baltes, 2002).

In SOC pattern the primary main focus of selection(S) is on goal regulation. Biological, social, and physiological opportunities and limitations during life time specify a broad spectrum of various goals and performance extent. We distinguish between two selections, elective selection (ES) and loss-based selection (LBS), for there is a significant difference between their practical and causal offspring. SE focuses on optimal and favorite moods like when an individual insists on his job to become professional, while LBS is the result of experiencing a loss related to the goals. In fact it is inferred that controlling a specific level of performance in special extent of a goal has faced a threat.

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LBS require reforming of individual goal system (Freund and Baltes, 2002). Optimization is the process of acquiring and controlling the related instrument to the goals. Optimization can be explained as learning the relating skills; new sources and skill practices to the goal (Freund and Baltes, 1998). Compensation, like optimization, includes some instruments. In fact compensation is explained as using various instruments to keep specific level of performance when related instruments to a special goal is not available, asking others' helping is one of these instruments (Freund and Baltes, 2002).

Basic theory of this study is Epstein cognitive-experiential self-theory. According to this theory, human beliefs which are the basis of his behaviors and emotions are made by his communication with environment (Epstein, 2008). Epstein (2003) considers beliefs as the most important components of personal theory of reality; therefore they have a significant role in specifying the quality of thought, emotion and behavior. Major beliefs are as a spectrum from negative to positive. Research findings show that major beliefs have a key role in explaining personality and cognitive features (Wiese et al., 2002; Dastjani-Farahani et al., 2014; Hasanvand-Amoozade et al., 2014). This evidence revealed that cognitive and personality variables are the strongest and most stable ones which explain life management strategies (SOC) for more information read (Chou and Chi, 2002; Freund and Baltes, 2002; Gestsdottir and Lerner, 2007; Bowers et al., 2011; Jelvani, 2011; Optiz et al., 2012).

According to SOC the individual is trying to achieve his goal. As a matter of fact, having personal goals can show meaningfulness of life (Freund and Baltes, 2002). Trying to achieve a goal makes the individual feel confident (Jelvani, 2011). Epstein (2003) believes when an individual is sure he can control, predict, and change the events and life situations, he is showing his believing in meaningful world, so it is expected that there will be a positive relationship between meaningful world and SOC components.

Believing in favorable-self shows the individual interpretation of him-self. On the other hand the individual performance in selection, optimization and compensation strategies is done mostly by his evaluation of himself and his abilities; they are his sources. Besides, the individual has an interpretation of his efficiency and appropriateness which is activated by motivators (Hejazi et al., 2014). Epstein (2003) said these interpretations together make general judgments which affect the quality of his performance and behaviors.

Baltes et al., (1999), Wiese et al (2002), and Ouwehand et al (2007) have referred to the relationships between life management strategies and people beliefs. There is no available study, investigating the relationship of life management strategies with favorable self and world meaningfulness. In previous studies about explaining the performance and fundamental role of life management strategies (SOC), beliefs system was ignored much more than other things. Since there are the gaps in previous studies about the factors explaining life management strategies (SOC), studying these factors are of great importance. Moreover, confirming the predictive role of major beliefs not only can help to understand differences and individual life management styles, but also are important in practical usages, for life management strategies are more stable than beliefs and in most counseling method belief system change is of great importance (Ellis, 1962). As a result in this study believing in favorable self and world meaningfulness are expected to predict life management strategies.

Methodology

This study was a kind of descriptive one which was done by correlation method. The population was all students of Technician, BA, and MA of Universities of Qouchan city in Iran who were from different fields. The sample was 467 students (225 boys and 212 girls), chosen by proportionate

stified sampling. They were from 18 to 50 years old and their means and standard deviations were 23 and 4.47 respectively. Frequency of the students based on their fields was as this: 134 students of human science (28.7%), 228 students of engineering (48.8%), and 105 students of fundamental science (22.5 %). Moreover their frequency based on their educational levels was as this: 111 students of technician (23.8 %), 316 students of BAs (67.7%), and 40 students of MAs (8.6%). The relationships among variables and their predictive roles were found by correlation analysis, done by Pearson method and multiple regression analysis, using Enter method. In order to find the validity, SOC questionnaire of confirmatory factor analysis was applied. Besides, to study the reliability of the studying inventories, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The instrument of gathering data was two questionnaires; their psychometric features will be introduced.

Basic Beliefs Inventory (BBI): This questionnaire was designed by Catline and Epstein in 1992. In Iran it was standardized by Shirzadifard (2011), confirming its high validity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for meaningful world and favorable self were 0.87 and 0.72 respectively, while test-retest coefficients were reported as 0.83 during 4 weeks. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for believing in meaningful world and favorable self were 0.88 and 0.73 respectively.

Selection, Optimization, and Compensation Questionnaire (SOC): This questionnaire was designed by Freund and Baltes in 2002 and includes 4 scales namely elective selection (ES), loss-based selection (LBS), optimization (O), and Compensation (C). The findings revealed that this questionnaire has high reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for elective selection, Loss-based selection, optimization and compensation were 0.78, 0.72, 0.68, and 0.67 respectively. The achieved test-retest coefficients of the questionnaire were 0.74 and 0.82 through 4 weeks (Freund and Baltes, 2002). Since it was the first time to use this questionnaire in Iran, studying psychometric features was essential. Its validity was investigated by confirmatory factor analysis. To confirm the questionnaire factor structure, presented by its designer, four- factor scale was used and fit indexes were calculated. As table 1 show, all fit indexes of the pattern showed a good fitting of the pattern with the data. (X^2/DF), (CFI), (GFI), (AGFI), (RMSEA) indexes were all optimal (Bentler, 1990). Based on these indexes, it can be concluded that not only did presupposed patterns have a good fitness with data, but also the questionnaire has high reliability, for Cronbach's alpha coefficients for elective selection, loss-based selection, optimization, and compensation were 0.56, 0.64, 0.75, and 0.77 respectively.

Table1. Fit indexes of confirmatory pattern in life management strategy questionnaire

RMSEA	AGFI	GFI	CFI	X^2/df	df	X^2
0.03	0.90	0.91	0.93	1.31	1005	1313.48

Results

To investigate the relationship of believing world meaningfulness and favorable self with life management strategies (SOC) correlation analysis was used by Pearson method. The results are presented in table 2, showing that believing in favorable self and meaningful world have positive relationship with elective selection, loss-based selection, optimization, and compensation; all these relationships are significant in the level of 0.01. In this study, it was supposed that believing in favorable self and world meaningfulness can predict life management strategies (SOC), so multiple regression analysis with enter method was applied. Significance level of F in all these three equations, presented in table 3, reveals that R^2 is significant.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients of basic believes with life management strategies (SOC)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 - believing in favorable self	1					
2 - believing in meaningful world	0.53**	1				
3 - Elective selection	0.33**	0.47**	1			
4 - Loss- based selection	0.18**	0.19**	0.36**	1		
5 - Optimization	0.32**	0.45**	0.57**	0.39**	1	
6 - Compensation	0.31**	0.42**	0.47**	0.41**	0.66**	1

*: P< 0.05 , **: P< 0.01

Standard regression coefficient (β) and regression significance test (T) showed that believing in meaningful world and favorable self with positive significant Beta coefficient can predict elective selection, loss-based selection, optimization and compensation. They can predict 0.23, 0.05, 0.21, and 0.18 of these variables changes. In all these analyses, believing in meaningful world has more predictive power than favorable self. Likewise among SOC component, elective selection was the most predictable, while loss-based selection was the least predictable one.

Table 3. Regression analysis of life management Strategies prediction based on basic believes

Criterion variables	Predictor variables	R	R ²	F	P-value	β	t	P-value
Elective selection	believing in world meaningfulness	0.48	0.23	68.58	0.001	0.40	8.37	0.001
	believing in favorable-self					0.11	2.46	0.014
Loss- based selection	believing in world meaningfulness	0.21	0.05	10.81	0.001	0.12	2.39	0.017
	believing in favorable-self					0.11	2.09	0.037
Optimization	believing in world meaningfulness	0.46	0.21	60.97	0.001	0.38	7.78	0.001
	believing in favorable-self					0.12	2.47	0.014
Compensation	believing in world meaningfulness	0.42	0.18	51.99	0.001	0.35	7.09	0.001
	believing in favorable-self					0.12	2.41	0.016

Conclusion

This study showed the role of believing in favorable self and world meaningfulness in predicting life management (SOC). The findings revealed that believing in favorable self and world meaningfulness can considerably predict elective selection (0.23), loss-based selection (0.05),

optimization (0.21), and compensation (0.18). Based on the findings, it can be concluded that those who consider the world more meaningful and have more optimal beliefs in themselves, use more life management strategies; they manage their life much better.

Results of this study verify Epstein cognitive- experiential self-theory. In this theory, major beliefs have a key role in interpreting the situations and events by people (Epstein, 2003). As a result it can be concluded that person total cognitive evaluation of life situations is highly affected by his major beliefs (Diener, 1984). According to the notions of cognitive-experiential self-theory believing in being able to both control and predict the world and change the situations are the signs of believing in world meaningfulness. On the other hand, the notions of SOC pattern focus on the goal following strategies and achievement planning. Totally, according to these notions and findings of this study, the relationships between believing in world meaningfulness and life management strategies is explained as this: if an individual did not believe in either the world to be predictable and controllable, or his ability to control and change the situations, he could neither set his goals nor plan for his life. In other words, on the condition that he believes in the world being predictable and controllable, he can plan to achieve his goals and follow them.

In cognitive-experiential self-theory, the individual has an idea about himself which is based on his beliefs in his values, efficiency, and appropriateness. These ideas make total judgments which affect the individual performance and behavior (Epstein, 2003). However, based on SOC notions and findings of this study, it is inferred that the way of individual's performance in managing his life and clarifying the goals and the ways to achieve them can be affected by the individual evaluation of himself and his abilities. In fact, people who have optimal beliefs in themselves and their abilities not only use life management strategies (elective selection, loss-based selection, optimization, and compensation) more, but also manage their life more successfully.

According to these findings, if an individual considered both his world more meaningful and controllable and himself more valuable and respectable, he would follow his goals more appropriately. In other words, on the way to achieve their goals, as they face losses and shortages of life, they reset their goals or choose a new one. They not only try to learn the required instructions, but also keep specific stage in their performance. In fact they manage their life successfully.

As a matter of fact there is no research studying the relationship of believing in favorable self and meaningfulness of world with life management strategies, even though there are related studies, referring to total relationships between beliefs and life management strategies. In a study, Freund and Baltes (1998), investigating the relationships between SOC strategies and life satisfaction, considered major beliefs as essential variables, as a result they controlled it. Moreover, Wiese et al., (2002) reported personality and beliefs as the factors predicting SOC strategies. Therefore findings of this study are in accordance with previous ones. Since major beliefs of people are made by communication and environment, it is suggested to teach its roles and importance to parents. On the other hand, since schools and educational places have a key role informing major beliefs, it is recommended to pay special attention to educational planning for teachers and instructors.

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